



# Al-Risala 1996

May-June

## Peace in Islam

Peace is the religion of the universe. Peace should, therefore, be the religion of man too, so that, in the words of Jesus Christ, the will of the Lord may be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6: 10).

When God created heaven and the earth, He so ordered things that each part might perform its function peacefully without clashing with any other part. The Qur'an tells us that "the sun is not allowed to overtake the moon, nor does the night outpace the day. Each in its own orbit runs." (36:40)

For billions of years, therefore, the entire universe has been fulfilling its function in total harmony with His divine plan.

While God has imposed upon the universe the law of nature, in submission to which all of the things making up the universe follow the path of peace, there remains just one exception – that of man. Man has been endowed by God with the free will to make moral choices. He may, or may not follow the path of peace which is so uniformly followed by the rest of the universe.

If human beings, with their freedom of choice, are to be kept on the path of peace, society must be kept free of corrupting elements. That is why the Qur'an enjoins men "not to corrupt the land after it has been set in order" (7:85). The system of nature devised by God already rests on the basis of peace; if this system is not disrupted, it will continue to stay the course set for it by the Almighty. Peace is actually inherent in nature and, as such, cannot be artificially imposed upon man as if it were an external factor.

In order to preserve the peace established by nature from disruption, two important injunctions have been laid down by Islam. One, at the individual level, stresses the exercise of patience, and the other, at the social level, forbids taking the offensive.

The greatest factor responsible for disrupting peace in daily living is negative reaction on the part of individuals. It repeatedly happens in social life that one experiences bitterness on account of others. On such occasions, display of resentment could cause matters to escalate to the point of a head-on collision. That is why Islam repeatedly enjoins us to tread the path of patience. The Qur'an says: "Surely the patient will be paid their wages in full without measure (39: 10). The reason for the rewards for patience being so great is that patience is the key factor in maintaining the desired system of God. In the words of the Q'ur'an, the patient man "is the helper of God" (61:14).

The other injunction, designed to maintain peace in human society, forbids the waging of an offensive war. No one, in Islam, enjoys the right to wage war against another. There are no grounds on which this could be considered justifiable.

There is only one kind of war permitted in Islam, and that is a defensive war. It is only if one nation, by deviating from the principles of nature, wages war against another, that a defensive war may be waged by the country under attack. Even then, it must be of temporary nature, and subject to humanitarian considerations.

To sum up, Islam is a religion of peace. The Arabic root of Islam is 'silm' which means peace. The Qur'an states: ' ... and God calls to the home of peace' (10:25).

Peace is the basic to all religions. Let us all strive then to establish peace in the world, for that is the bedrock on which all human progress rests.

### **The greatest deeds are the most difficult of all**

"Three actions are the most difficult," the Prophet once remarked: "Being fair with others on matters concerning oneself; helping others by giving from one's own possessions; and remembering God at all times."

## Gratitude and Ingratitude

Right from a glass of water to political power, whatever we receive in this world is a gift from God. Everything is a direct blessing of the Almighty. Man receives everything in this world by His will. If God does not so desire, no one can succeed in anything, no matter hard he may try. This is a truth which is made very clear in the Qur'an and the Hadith.

We learn, moreover, from the Qur'an and the Hadith that there are two kinds of divine gifts, one a special gift and the other a general gift.

Political power falls into the first category, for as the Qur'an explains, political power is not given to everyone. Neither can it be received by launching a political movement or subscribing to a gun culture. It is, in fact, directly dependant upon the Sunnah of God. One such sunnah or law of God, according to the Qur'an, is His promise to believers and the doers of good works "to make them masters in the land as He had made their ancestors before them." (24:55)

That is to say, even when our aim is political power, our task, rather than the launching of political movements, will be to strive to bring people back to the true Islamic faith and good actions.

The general gift of God, received by all the people to a greater or lesser degree consists, in principle, of two things – peaceful circumstances and plentiful supplies of food. By withholding such a gift, Allah could punish the wrongdoers:

"Allah has made an example of the city which was once safe and peaceful. Its provisions used to come in abundance from every quarter: but its people denied the favours of Allah. Therefore, He afflicted them with famine and fear as a punishment for what they did." (16: 112)

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## Unlimited Reward

Say: 'My servants who believe, fear your Lord. Those who do good works in this life shall receive a good reward. Allah's earth is vast. Those that endure with fortitude shall be requited without measure' (39: 10).

It may seem extraordinary that God should give an unlimited reward for any action. But it is only one action – that is, patience, that is so singled out.

The root of Sabr, (that is, patience) means 'to refrain from privation.' There are two kinds of actions: in one, certain limits, are observed; in the other, no such restraint is shown. For instance, if someone is good to you, he receives good treatment from you in return. People of quite ordinary character behave in this way without feeling it necessary to exercise any patience or forbearance. Even the adherents of a religion which does not demand any personal sacrifice are unconscious of the need to practice restraint.

However, one inclined to embark on the second kind of action is required to adhere strictly to religious guidelines which enjoin restraint, and he must do so whether the circumstances be favourable or unfavourable to him. This is the path of patience.

That is, even when someone is unkind to you, you are good to him. Even if he adopts a provocative stance, you remain moderate in your behaviour. Even if observance of the truth will be detrimental to your interests, you continue to adhere to the path of truth and justice. Even if the adoption of an unprincipled stand appears advantageous, you continue to be a man of principle. It is the practitioners of that aspect of religion which demands patience who will be 'requited without measure.'

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## Fasting – A means of spiritual purification

The month of fasting is a period of spiritual purification. A time of proximity to the Lord, it is a special month of training meant to engender all those qualities desirable in Islam. The Encyclopedia Britannica has this to say in the chapter on fasting:

The month of Ramadan in Islam is observed as a period of penitence and total fasting from dawn to dusk. (IV /62) Penitence, undoubtedly an important part of Islam, so permeates the entire Islamic system, that no Islamic act, including fasting, is devoid of this spirit.

However, while enjoining fasting, the Qur'an tells us that its special significance in the month of Ramadan is thanks giving as well as penitence.

It was in the month of Ramadan that the first revelations of the Quranic verses came down to the Prophet. It was a great blessing of God that He revealed this guidance in the form of the Qur'an so that it might be a true guide for man. That is why this month came to be held as one of thanks giving for the believers.

'*Taqwa*' (God-fearing life) means a cautious life. Success for man in both worlds lies in his invariably adopting the path of caution in all matters of life. It is *taqwa*, a guarded, disciplined life, that is the goal of fasting.

Fasting, an experience of powerlessness despite the possession of power is an annual exercise in self-discipline. And only that person has fasted, in the true sense of the word who emerges from the experience not only a thankful and pious devotee of Allah but also a human being in complete control of his thoughts, words and deeds.

## A Congregational Prayer

According to Abdullah ibn Umar, the Prophet Muhammad observed: A prayer in congregation is 27 times superior to a prayer performed individually. (*Muwatta Imam Malik*)

The desired states of prayer are increased when the prayer is performed by a congregation of worshippers. That is why its reward is more than that of a prayer said individually.

For a congregational prayer the individual has to think of it ahead of the appointed hour, as he has to set out for the mosque in good time. In this way, his mind is already occupied with thoughts of worship. Then, on the way to the mosque, he is reminded at every step that he is heading towards the house of God. It is as if, even before the prayer starts, he is busy with prayer.

In the mosque, there is an unalloyed atmosphere of worship, and the devotee feels that he is not the only person at prayer: he has joined a vast brotherhood. If, at individual prayer, he was a worshipper in the simple sense of the word, he now shares the status of a preserver of the ritual of *namaz* for succeeding generations.

Then the congregational prayer in itself is a source of great reward. In individual prayer the worshipper was as if his own leader (Imam) at prayer. But by saying his prayers in congregation he gives proof of greater modesty and reverence for Allah. In individual prayer he had renewed his consciousness of Islam individually. In congregational prayer he experiences this more intensely along with his fellow men.

In individual prayer he had received divine provision at the level of an individual. In congregational prayer he shares in God's provision descending on the entire congregation.

Another significant aspect of congregational prayer is that through it he imbibes with his brothers the sacred atmosphere of the mosque. He learns from them and they learn from him. He is both a giver and a taker. If formerly he has simply performed *namaz* in private, he now becomes in congregational prayer a standard bearer of Islam.

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## An Exemplary Tale

Last summer I met Mr. Abdul Muhit (a retired Joint Director of technical education, now living in Faizabad in U.P.) who related some of the experiences he had during his service tenure. The following is one which struck me as being of particular interest.

Mr. A.M. Khan did a B.E. degree in electrical engineering at Banaras Hindu University in 1955. Some years later, in 1963, a vacancy for a Senior Lecturer was advertised in the private polytechnic of Chandauli (Distt. Varanasi). The successful candidate was expected to function as the head of the department of electrical engineering.

The interview for this post was to be held at the official residence of J.B. Tandon, the Commissioner of Varanasi, who at that time was the President of the Managing Committee. In his capacity as President he was present at the interview.

Professors Ram Saran and Garula were the other members of the interview board. The latter had taught Mr. Khan at the Banaras Hindu University.

Prof. Ram Saran started by putting this question to Mr. Khan:

"Do you know what an instrument transformer is?"

Mr. Khan had not even begun to answer the question when Prof. Garula, addressing the commissioner Tandon said: "He is the best candidate. There is no question of interview.

Then he said to Mr. Khan: 'Mr. Khan, you can go.'

Prof. Saran kept quiet. Mr. Khan took his papers and left the room. After one week he received his appointment letter, appointing him as the Senior Lecturer of the Chandauli Polytechnic and the Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering. Subsequently, he continued to receive promotions until he retired as Joint Director, Technical Education.

Often we come across youths who tell us that no employment is available. But the truth is that there is an absence of worthy candidates. Mr. Khan received such an unexpected response only because he had worked very hard at his studies, always securing good marks. His performance and character throughout his studies were highly commendable. Prof. Garula and others thus formed a good impression of him. This was why he had become the first choice.

Every institute and office wants good workers, because without competent persons offices cannot be run satisfactorily. No one is an enemy to his own self. That is why no one can ignore a good worker.

Good, dependable workers are generally in demand. If you fulfill the needs of, others, you will be sought out by them.

This world runs on the principle of give and take. Here no value is placed on grievances, protests and demands. The simple rule observed by this world is receiving and giving in equal measure. If you want employment, you must make yourself useful. You must develop the skills needed by other people. Then you will have no complaints to make against them. And they will have no complaints to make against you.

Then you will see that you don't need to pursue employment. Instead employment will pursue you.

## Losing One's Home

On the 28th of March, 1995, a Mrs. Indu Vahi committed suicide by jumping from the 8th floor of Asia House, a building situated on Kasturba Gandhi Marg, quite close to Connaught Place, in New Delhi. As the chief newsreader in the Hindi Department of All India Radio, she had been allotted a two-room residential flat on the first floor of Asia House, which is a government building. When she retired last year at the age of sixty, she was required to give up this flat where she had lived for the last twenty years. The last date for vacating was the 31st of March.

Mrs. Vahi, widowed in 1989, became very depressed after retirement, even although she had the company of her daughter Sonia and her son-in-law, Ashok Kumar. According to The Hindustan Times of 29 March, 1995, she had acquired a house in Radio Colony of the Trans-Yamuna area before her retirement, but somehow she had felt very dejected at having to move there. This was possibly because of the paucity of civic amenities there as compared with her government allotted home, which was very centrally situated and near the elegant shopping centre of Connaught Place. This feeling so obsessed her that she climbed up to the top floor of the Asia House and leaped to her death.

When I read this news item, I felt that it was indeed a tragic incident. Then I said to myself, "there was someone who could not bear the thought of shifting from a comfortable flat to a humble dwelling. But what of one's condition if one were to be totally deprived of shelter?"

Even if people do not commit suicide, they still have to die. After death, the realization will come to them that all their possessions have suddenly been snatched away. On that day, all house owners will become homeless. On that day, it will be only those upon whom Allah looks with favour, only those to whom He will grant an abode in Paradise, who will ever again be householders. (I.SS/9.95)

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## Da'wah Hotline

Hello! Is there anyone to answer me? I am an American Jew, and I want to learn something about Islam. I rang several mosques in the USA, but failed to get a satisfactory answer. Please give me some information about Islam.

It was a telephone call received at the office of the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) in Jamaica. The person present at the office answered the call, giving the caller the required information as best as he could. Later on it came to my knowledge that such calls are often received in American mosques. But with no competent person to attend to the telephone, the callers often fail to get proper and satisfying answers. At times even there is no one present in the office at all.

Ultimately this incident at the ICNA Islamic Centre resulted in the installation of a Hotline telephone in this centre. It is called the Dawah Hotline and its number is 1-800-662-ISLAM. A well informed person is always present in the office to provide the necessary information on Islam to the caller. For the time being, this centre has secured the services of two competent persons with a good command of English and a proper knowledge of Islam. The initial cost was one lakh dollars. (*Dawat Daily*, July 13, 1995)

In bygone times, the *da'i* had to travel long distances to communicate his message to the *mad'u*. Now modern times have seen such revolutionary changes, that the *mad'u* himself is coming to *da'i*. Clearly, the need of the hour is to arrange for such centres in all the cities in the world – particularly in Indian cities – so that people may receive the desired information on Islam.

## The Study of Hadith

According to a hadith, Asma, daughter of Abu Bakr said: 'My foster mother came to me in Madina. She was still an idolater, and an ally of the Quraish (the dire enemy of Islam and Muslims). Then I told the Prophet that my idolatrous mother had come to me in need of assistance and asked if I should help her. The Prophet replied, "Yes, you must."

This hadith is set forth in the chapter which deals with the proper treatment of relatives, be they Muslim or non-Muslim. But to fully appreciate any given hadith, we must not only go deeper than the meaning apparent on a first reading, but must also look beyond the section under which it is classified to its broader historical context.

Besides laying stress on the rights of parents, the hadith tells us that this incident took place after the Quraysh and Muslims had signed a peace treaty, as a result of which the Meccan idolaters had started coming to Madina and the Madinan Muslims had started going to Mecca.

Quite understandably, such inter-communication brought into focus not only the rights of relatives but also the issues of *shirk* (idolatry) and *tawhid* (monotheism). The religion of the Prophet began to be compared with that of his forefathers, and the difference between superstition and revealed religion started becoming apparent to the people.

In this way the Sulh-e-Hudaybia (peace treaty) as a matter of strategy turned the atmosphere of militancy into one of peaceful dawah. Mecca and Medina, where the clash of swords had resounded now began reverberating with voices proclaiming the call of truth. With this, the victory of Islam became as certain as that of the sun after it has risen in the world of darkness.

## The Way of Moderation

According to a *hadith*, the Prophet Muhammad observed: The moderate action is the best of all actions. Hazrat Ali advised the people: 'Adopt the middle path.' (*Tafsir Qurtubi*, 154/2)

The middle path means the path of moderation. One instance of it can be seen in the following verse of the Qur'an:

'Be neither miserly nor prodigal, for then you should either be reproached or be reduced to penury.' (17:29)

The same point, worded differently, has been made in another verse which characterizes "the true servants of the Merciful" as "those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but maintain a just balance between those extremes" (25:67).

According to this verse, moderate spending means neither, lavishness nor miserliness but rather a balanced expenditure which will make life much easier to lead. In the same way, as regards optional fasts, prayers, etc., a middle path is desirable for man, as this enables him to maintain such a pattern of behaviour over a long period of time.

This middle path – the best path to follow – relates to all spheres of life. Man must shun extreme paths in all matters, for this accords with both the spirit of religion as well as with worldly success.

The middle path, to put it differently, is the non-emotional way. If a man loses his mental balance when confronted with any difficult situation in life, he goes to one extreme or the other. But if he keeps his feelings under control, he will be able to determine the proper course of action by giving it ample thought. A well considered deed is always a moderate one; one who does not follow a moderate path will exceed all bounds both in friendship and in enmity. He will also be given to undue optimism and pessimism in respectively positive and negative situations, and will unnecessarily regard some individuals as too bad and others as too good. However, it is the verdict of nature that in this world a moderate approach in life always succeeds, while taking the path of extremes inevitably leads to failure.

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## A Better Human Being

According to Abu Hurayra the Prophet Muhammad made this observation before a gathering: 'Should I not tell you who among you is good and who is bad' (that is, how to differentiate good from bad). The people who were thus addressed kept quiet. Then the Prophet repeated the same words thrice. Afterwards someone spoke up: 'Tell us who among us is good and who is not.' The Prophet then replied: 'Good among you are those from whom people expect good to come and they are secure from them. (At-Tirmizi)

This hadith tells us clearly who are good and who are bad. A good person is one of whom one can be sure in advance that whenever one deals with him he will be expecting only good in return. Nothing will induce him to be unjust in his dealings.

Everyone, even the good man, receives his share of ego by birth. He too dislikes things which are not to his liking. He becomes angry when provoked. He has the urge to avenge himself. But despite all this, he adheres to his principled stand.

He bears all psychological shocks patiently. He does not, with a knee-jerk mentality, return the bitter pill to others. He instead returns good for evil, expecting God to compensate him for the injustice done to him. In this way his mental equilibrium is not disturbed and he is able to continue his struggle for the noble cause of Islam with total devotion.

## One's Own Responsibility

An elderly British citizen once told me that during the Second World War, Sir Winston Churchill, Britain's Prime Minister and popularly acclaimed military leader, gave to the people of Britain the motto: IT ALL DEPENDS ON ME.

This is an excellent motto and one that is just as relevant in time of peace as it is in war.

My brother, Abdul Muheet Khan, who is an engineer, once told me of an incident at a training camp he had attended in Chandigarh, which is a good illustration of this motto. This camp, which was to be inaugurated by an Indian minister, had been arranged for the principals of various polytechnics, and a British professor had been invited to address them. When the minister was about to start his inaugural address, the power suddenly went off and the loudspeakers went dead. There was no battery on hand as an alternative arrangement. However, there was a battery available in the polytechnic's workshop.

The trainee principals started looking around for a peon or an attendant who could be sent to the workshop to fetch the battery. But as soon as the British professor realized what had happened, he himself dashed to the workshop, picked up the heavy battery and came running back to connect it to the loudspeaker system. The microphone immediately started functioning again.

Such an attitude on the part of an individual, whatever his community, is the underlying cause of the collective progress of the society to which he belongs. Similarly, at the national level, progress and development are directly correlated with the prevalence of this spirit among the people.

It is normal practice, when some wrong is observed in society, for proposals to be made that new laws be enacted, or changes made in the administration, so that the malady may be set right. But the legal system and the administration have their limits and, as such, are only partially effective. Genuine reform will come about only if the spirit of reform is generated among the people-concerned. (2SS/995)

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## Proof of Prophethood

The month of Ramadan is one of fasting in Islam. In its injunctions for this period, the Qur'an has this to say:

O believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you; perchance you will guard yourselves against evil. (2:83)

In modern times all the religions of the world have been subjected to a thorough study. This study shows that there is no major or Minor religion of the world without the concept of fasting, of one type or another. A western sociologist has observed: 'It would be difficult to name any religious system of any description in which it is wholly unrecognized.' (XII 93)

However, in the Arab tribes of ancient times there existed no practice of fasting. Philip Hitti, the author of *History of the Arabs* writes:

We have no evidence of any practice of fasting in pre-Islamic pagan Arabia. (p.133)

In view of this research, we learn that the pronouncements of the Qur'an on fasting are more than just an expression of religious obligation: they also carry the proof of prophethood. Fourteen hundred years ago, prior to the age of communication and information, it was not generally known that the practice of fasting was to be found, in one form or the other, in all the religions of the world. This serves as a proof that the Prophet was a messenger of God, since none but God could tell him of this reality, till then existing only outside his society.

## Result-oriented Action

In 1917 a suit was filed in Egypt's religious court in Cairo against an Egyptian Muslim theologian who had stated that since the Qur'an did not describe Adam as an apostle or a prophet, it was Noah who should have the status of first prophet. This was an opinion which caused a great deal of agitation in certain circles. The complaint lodged in the court was that the theologian had denied an established religious reality and, therefore, separation should be effected between him and his wife and the penalty for apostasy be imposed on him. The court accepted the plaint and gave a judgement against the theologian. He was pronounced to be an apostate and divorced from his wife.

But subsequently the case came before the court of appeal, whereupon the previous judgement was declared void. However, the judge admonished the theologian by observing: "You have grossly disgraced us before the people! While the Europeans are occupied with things which are beneficial to them, you are busy in useless pursuits."

Eighty years have passed since this incident, but Muslims the world over are still striving – with even great vigour – towards profitless ends. This is in the face of the Prophet's dictum: "Besides the other qualities of Islam, one is man's renunciation of disadvantageous activities."

Wisdom and Islam both demand that action be invariably result-oriented. One must think only of what is beneficial; speak only of what is well-meaning; do only what will yield positive results; and strive only to bring about a better future.

(3.SS/9.95)

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**Remaining silent is, in itself, a good deed**

“Keep silent unless you have something good to say,” said the Prophet

## Dream and Success

Mr. Ram Ratan Kapila runs a refrigerator and air-conditioner business by the name of Kapsons, its offices being located in Asaf Ali Road in New Delhi. Needing a catchy name for his firm, he advertised for one in the newspapers, promising a handsome reward for the best slogan. In spite of repeatedly advertising, no apt slogan was forthcoming. He kept racking his brain day in and day out, but could not hit on anything that sounded just right.

Six whole years came and went, then one night Mr. Kapila dreamt he was in a beautiful garden, with birds chirruping and perfect weather. Delighted with his surroundings, he exclaimed, "What wonderful weather!" It had taken him six years, but he had found the right catchphrase at last:

Kapsons: the weather masters.

The dream is an activity which goes on in the sleeping state inside the mind, often crystalline unformed thoughts and desires. Often what has been going on during the day appears in dreams at nights. History abounds in tales of discoveries which have been made through dreams, and problems, which had apparently been insoluble, being happily solved on wakening from an illuminating dream sequence. An inventor's mind, when totally engrossed in his invention, continues to project the ins and outs of the problems even when he is asleep. It is not unusual for answers to seemingly impossible questions to appear in the course of dreams. But this only happens as a result of total intellectual association with any given subject. Success is the result of devotion and assiduity, and is never the result of some unasked for miracle.

## Muslim Questions for Valid Islamic Response

*Under the auspices of the University of Florida two professors have worked on a book titled Christian Muslim Encounters (1995). In this regard a questionnaire was sent to Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. We reproduce here these questions and answers published in this book:*

### QUESTIONS

Thus far we have considered main features of the background needed for an understanding of the views of a select number of Muslim personalities living in the Republic of India. We now turn to an examination of those views. The overall question put to the respondents interviewed for this study was: "In which ways do select Indian Muslim thinkers conceive of an Islamically valid Muslim participation in the (political) life of the Republic of India (Bharat)?" To this were added five more specific questions:

1. Do you agree that the situation of the Muslim community in India (Bharat) where they participate as a numerical minority in a "sovereign, socialist secular democratic republic," is new in the annals of history? New, in that in this constellation the Muslims as such are neither rulers (*hakim*) nor ruled (*makhum*)?
2. If this is so, the need seems to arise for Muslims to develop an Islamic response, or, if you prefer, an Islamically valid rationale and justification for the Muslim community to live in Bharat as co-citizens. Short of such a valid rationale, there would seem to be possible for them only a mere *de facto* acceptance of the new situation, going together with inner discontent arising from an ideological contradiction perceived as irredeemable.
3. In which way will the teaching of Islam be presented and the elaboration and application of the *shari'a* be conducted so as to give legitimacy and meaning to the new situation of Muslims in post-partition of India?
4. Which particular elements in the foundational sources (Qur'an and Hadith) and the foundational model (*sira* of the Prophet) and which, possibly new, ways of understanding them would come into play in such an Islamic response (on the ideological level)?
5. Which modifications in the traditional understanding(s) of the *shari'a* and *usul al-fiqh* would seem to be justified and advisable in the elaboration of an adequate Islamic response to the new Indian Muslim situation?

### ANSWERS

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is the leader of the Al-Risala movement, the editor of a monthly of the same name, and author of numerous books. His response (August 1987) to question 1 immediately marks his

position as distinctly different from that of Nadwi: "Islam is not the name of a culture or of a political structure. Islam is the name of a personal action. And the opportunity to practice Islam is the name of a personal action. And the opportunity to practice Islam personally remains the same in all situations, irrespective of whether Islam is politically in power or not."

Question 2 leads him to state that India is neither *dar al-islam* nor *dar al-harb* but rather *dar al-da'wa*. "This means that Muslims, while establishing faith on a personal level, should, in equal measure, participate in the worldly matters of the country, just like their fellow-countrymen of other creeds. Furthermore, the presentation of their faith should be carried out peacefully. Permission to do so has been granted to us by the UN Charter of Human Rights as well as by the Indian constitution."

With regard to question 3 he comments: "The fact that the rights of different communities are accepted by the constitution of India is perfectly in consonance with Islam. As far as community matters are concerned, judgements should be based on the law of the country. So far as personal life is concerned, judgements should be based on Muslim personal law."

Replying to question 4 he takes up a sentiment expressed earlier by ulama belonging to or being close to the *Jam'iyyat al'Ulama*: "In the present context, I feel that Muslims must look for basic guidance in those teachings of the Qur'an which were revealed to the Prophet during the thirteen-year period he spent in Mecca – more than half his prophethood. The Prophet immigrated to Medina where he lived for ten years until his death, but it is the Meccan period which has the greater relevance to the prevailing situation in India. That is the period, therefore, which should serve as a model to Indian Muslims."

Regarding tasks of legal construction, Wahiduddin remarks that in his view the Salafi school of jurisprudence is, in principle, most relevant to the present-day situation in India since it "enshrines Islamic commands directly taken from the Qur'an and Hadith where Hanafi *fiqh* was compiled basically to meet the needs of the ruling period of Islam."

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## Avoid functions whose sole purpose is ostentation

Invited to a feast, Umer ibn Khattab and Uthman ibn Affan were on their way there, when Umer said to Uthman: "We have accepted this invitation, but I would prefer not to be going." "Why is that?" asked Uthman. "I am afraid it is all just for show," said Umer – meaning the invitation they had been given. (Ahmad, Musnad)

## Indo-Pak Detente

Under the auspices of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, an international meeting was held in New Delhi on February 5-6, 1996 to discuss the possibility of an Indo-Pak dialogue, which hopefully, would find ways and means to normalize relations between India and Pakistan. Although held at an unofficial level – it being more a function of 'Third-track democracy' – it was attended by dignitaries from both countries.

As a participant on this occasion, I debated whether we could discover a practicable formula acceptable to both countries. I concluded that a via media could be arrived at, basing my judgement on the strategy adopted by the Prophet of Islam as a result of which he achieved the greatest success in human history.

This formula, in short, is *al-Fasi bain al-Qaziyatain*, or the de-linking of two issues. Pakistan, being an Islamic state, is bound to follow in the Prophet's footsteps. India, on the other hand, is a secular state. Nevertheless, because of the reasonableness of the above proposal, I am convinced that if Pakistan were to adopt it, India would have no hesitation in following suit, particularly when it has already instituted the process of de-linking issues in its relations with China.

I must add that the acceptance of such a formula would be no sign of weakness on the part of either country, such policies having become the inevitable imperatives of modern circumstances. That is why the USA, albeit a superpower, is likewise following the identical policy of separating politics and economics in its dealings with China. It is a well-known fact that America's separation of its economic interests from its political stand on human rights has resulted in its increased leverage in that country. India and Pakistan should also learn from this and profit from it wherever possible.

It should be borne in mind that this is a formula which accords both with Islam and with nature. What we should do, therefore, – if not in principle, then at least in practice – is put aside all political conflicts, in particular, the problem of Kashmir. Peaceful negotiations on this issue may continue but both countries shall have to make a resolve that under no circumstances will there be any transgression of the boundaries of peaceful dialogue.

This is the need of the hour if we are to save ourselves from unnecessary losses in vital fields due to present-day confrontational attitudes. This formula, which was adopted by the Prophet in state as well as in international matters, was a very reasonable one. I shall give here three examples of its application which have a direct bearing on the present situation.

- I. As recorded by Sahih al-Bukhari, the Prophet of Islam was once seated by the wayside when a funeral procession passed by. On seeing it, the Prophet stood up. One of his companions remarked that it was the funeral of a Jew. The Prophet replied: "Was he not a human being?" The Jew in question had belonged to a faction which opposed Islam. But the view the Prophet took of him

kept apart the two sides of his personality. From one point of view, he was a Jew and a dire opponent of Muslims and their religion, Islam, but, from another point of view, he was simply a human being. It was the wise separation of two distinct aspects of the deceased which made it possible for the Prophet to stand up to show him respect.

2. Another example of this principle as applied to national life is to be found in the history of Islam, namely, the Treaty of Hudaybiya. This was a no-war pact entered into by the Prophet with those very people who unjustly held Mecca and the House of God in their tyrannical grip. Prior to the beginning of this treaty, they had not allowed the Prophet and his companions to visit the House of God (Kaba), notwithstanding God's declaration in the Qur'an that this holy shrine would remain open to visits from both townspeople and outsiders.

The negotiation of this peace treaty became possible only after the Prophet had separated religion from the political conflict in the Meccan context, thereby eliminating possible causes of friction. This peace treaty, as finally drawn up, yielded innumerable benefits. One important consequence was that it made free movement possible between Mecca and Medina, despite the existence of political differences. The road to mutual commerce was thereupon thrown open. People began travelling everywhere in an unrestricted manner for the purposes of education and commerce, and there eventually came a time when both warring groups started to live together as friends.

3. A signal example of the adoption of this principle in international affairs was the Prophet's decision in the case of Qibla of *Bait alMaqdis*. After the emigration, when the Prophet had reached Medina from Mecca, and had established the ritual of congregational prayer to be performed five times a day, he proclaimed Quds (Palestine) as the Qibla for worship. (This remained in force for about seventeen months.) But at that point in time, Quds was under the dominion of an idolatrous Persian King. The Prophet solved this seemingly insoluble problem by simply separating the spiritual from the temporal in this instance. Only then was it possible for him to make Quds the Qibla for worship. Had the Prophet not adopted this *policy*, such a decision would never have been possible.

Over the last fifty years, relations between India and Pakistan have been vitiated by political controversy. During this very long period each side has given its full attention to settling matters to its own advantage. But the result has been quite the reverse. And without there being any signs of these political controversies ever being resolved, precious resources have been, and are still being wasted in senseless confrontation.

Now, the wisest policy, from the respective standpoints of reason and religion, would be for both countries to base their foreign policy on the de-linking of political and economic issues. As far as the issue of political conflict is concerned, they would be well advised to adopt a wait-and-see policy, and to avoid taking any practical step save that of peaceful negotiation. This is what will ultimately open all doors to activity in non-political arenas.

Once Vinoba Bhave visited Kashmir, and when he arrived near the border, he was met by a number of army officers. Pointing to the geographical division, one of them said, "up to this point we have our pickets. After that the pickets are those of our enemies." Vinobaji replied: "Don't say 'enemies': say 'neighbours.' "

If the de-linking policy could only be adopted by both countries, they would start looking at each other not as enemies but as neighbours. Then destructive policies soon yield to constructive activities on both sides of the border. Once this became a reality, it would only be a matter of a few years before both countries were transformed into flourishing areas of development, just like other countries of the same region, such as Singapore, Korea, Malaysia and Japan.

As a consequence of de-linking – despite the continuing existence of conflicts – people's two-way movement across the border would greatly increase, resulting in interaction between Indians and Pakistanis on an ever-increasing scale. As we all know, interaction in itself – especially on a person-to-person basis – is an effective means of removing misunderstanding between disaffected parties, and is the first step towards paving the way to better relations between them.

Moreover, there are tremendous opportunities for commercial exchanges between the two countries. Could the de-linking process be set in motion, free trade would automatically ensue and international tourism would itself expand, resulting in extraordinary economic benefit to both countries. Similarly, in the fields of education, culture and politics, there exist great opportunities for interchange. The exchanging of cultural delegations would mean that young people could start visiting each other's countries, and with educational activities becoming a means of interaction between the younger generations, innumerable benefits would accrue to both sides in the years to come.

It should be conceded that clash and confrontation between neighbouring countries is destructive to both, and that the pursuit of reconciliation is the key to progress and prosperity.

If India and Pakistan were to adopt this de-linking principle on a reciprocal basis, both would gain immensely in many spheres. Certainly no one would be the loser. It is a matter of common knowledge that confrontation between the two countries over political matters has become a way of life over the last half century. And now a heavy price is being paid for this, both countries having wasted almost half of their respective incomes in pursuing this policy year in and year out, without any observable gain to either side. In fact, the state of affairs is exactly as it was in 1947.

Now if both these countries were to adopt the suggested formula, it would simply mean that the political state of affairs would remain unchanged, but that its remaining so would not be at the cost of ruined national economy. Political stalemate would no longer entail the wastage of precious material resources, once the impetus had been given – by de-linking to a great upswing in commercial and cultural affairs. What the demands of reason are in such a situation are plain for all discerning persons to see.

(231:20)

## Success in Perseverance

It has been very aptly observed that success lies in perseverance. The entire gamut of human history testifies to the truth of this saying. Life's journey, frequently directed along uneven paths, is one in which one faces many unfavourable situations. Yet the wayfarer has to continue his journey whatever the odds. This is called perseverance. One who possesses this quality reaches the destination of success in this world. The greater the perseverance the greater the success.

This is a law of nature. Just open your eyes and you will find clear indications of this reality.

I am reminded of the man, standing by the side of a rock, who looked down and found that, due to the continuous lashing of the waves, the rock had worn away, remarked to me, "Look, the rock is a hard object, while water is so soft. But even if as soft a thing as water acts with perseverance, it can crush as hard an object as a rock into pieces. All the huge quantities of sand found on the sea shores have been produced by this lashing of water against the rocks."

The career of Dr. Subramaniam Chandrashekhar (1910-1995) provides a recent human parallel. From his childhood he showed keen interest in mathematics and astronomy. Later on he took up as the subject for his research the birth and death of the stars. In this connection, he presented his initial conclusion in the form of a research paper at a meeting of Astrophysical Society held on January 11, 1935. Scientists of repute, including Sir Arthur Eddington, were present at the meeting. Sir Arthur Eddington ridiculed Chandrashekhar and tore his papers to pieces.

Later on Chandrashekhar wanted this paper to be published in the Astrophysical Journal published from London. But his paper was rejected. Disheartened by this discouraging experience, he left Britain for India. Here he applied to different universities for a job but failed to find one. He was rejected both at home and abroad.

Yet this was not enough to dishearten Chandrashekhar. He now left India for Chicago, where he found the circumstances more favourable. He devoted himself once again to his research. Gradually his theory became so popular that his papers were regularly published in important scientific journals and magazines. Ultimately his theory came to be accepted as *Chandrashekhar Limit* in the world of science. At the age of 73, in 1983, he was awarded the Nobel prize for science.

Human history is replete with such exemplary lives. Anyone who has achieved any real success in this world has done so through continuous effort and perseverance. There is no other path to success in this world.

It has been observed that if you want to achieve success for yourself, you should cultivate the virtue of patience, for success is always dependent upon the exercise of patience. This is necessary because in a period of struggle such obstacles come in the way as apparently remove one further from one's destination. That is why man must never allow himself to become discouraged. Equipped with patience and perseverance, he should persist in his efforts.

This is so great a certainty that it leaves no choice as to our course of action. We have to abide by this verdict of nature, for we can survive only by living in accordance with it. It is not possible for us to change the system of nature.

Given this state of affairs, wisdom demands that we refrain from wasting our time in complaints and protests, and take steps to banish despair and discouragement. Adopting the path of realism, one must continue one's efforts. In that case success will become as certain as the setting of the sun in the evening and of its rising again the next morning. Unflagging effort inevitably leads one to one's desired goal.

Nature requires only a few months to grow a crop of cucumber. But this is not the case with the oak tree. Nature here requires a period of a hundred years. Then how can man be exempt from this universal principle?

If you are not willing to accept the reality of a long period of struggle, then you shall have to be content with very minor success: the necessary price of great success is long-term endeavour. One who is not willing to pay this price should not expect any great success.

(This speech was broadcasted from the All India Radio, New Delhi, on September 28, 1995)

## Big Heartedness

The first Umayyad Caliph, Mu'awiya, was ruling in Damascus. Most of the eastern Byzantine empire had been conquered by Islam. The Caesar had been forced to withdraw to Constantinople, and hold out there. Yet he made incursions into Muslim territory. In one clash the Romans imprisoned some Muslims, one of whom was a man belonging to the Quraysh. When the Caesar learnt of this, he asked for the captives to be brought before him.

The Muslim captives were brought into the Caesar's court with their hands tied and feet in chains. "This will be the punishment for ones like you," were the disparaging words the emperor addressed to them. "We will give you a slow death, as a lesson to your compatriots that they should cease infringing on our territory."

The emperor's words aroused the Qurayshi's honour, and he answered back in a severe tone. "As long as you remain an enemy of Islam," he said, "there will be no peace between us. The price of our blood is a cheap one to pay for death in the path of God. But how precious our blood becomes when it is spilled by a worthless ruler like you."

A patriarch of the Caesar's court became incensed on hearing the Qurayshi's words. He came up and hit the Muslim captive on both sides of the face. The Qurayshi's hands were tied. At that time he could offer no resistance. What he did was yell in a loud voice: "Mu'awiya, where are you now? Are you not going to take revenge on these dastardly people who have stricken a man of noble birth – one of your own household?" Then he looked towards the patriarch. "I swear by God that there will come a day when you will realize who I am."

Mu'awiya was greatly aggrieved when news of this incident reached Damascus. He resolved to do something to atone for what had happened. First of all, he arranged an exchange of prisoners with the Byzantine emperor. So great was his determination to secure the release of his men that he agreed to free a greater number of Roman soldiers in exchange for them.

Once the captives had returned home, Mu'awiya surreptitiously hatched a plot. He obtained the services of a man of Syria, a merchant who knew the Roman language. Mu'awiya gave him a great quantity of gold and money, charging him with the task of arresting the patriarch and bringing him to Damascus.

The Syrian travelled as a merchant from Damascus to Constantinople. Before long he had established the identity of the patriarch and made friends with him wooing him with gifts of perfumes, jewels, silk and other such precious items. The Syrian made several trips between the two cities, bringing the patriarch gifts each time. The whole operation was conducted in the utmost secrecy, with no one save Mu'awiya, and the merchant himself, learning of it.

A lengthy period elapsed. Contacts between the two men became so close that the patriarch requested certain specific gifts, which the Syrian promised to bring. On his return to Damascus, he purchased a swift camel and, along with a camel driver, brought it to a place near Constantinople. He himself went on to meet the patriarch. "I have brought all your gifts," he told the Roman, "let's go and collect them." Thus he contrived to take the patriarch to where the camel and his companion were waiting. There both men caught hold of him, tied his hands and feet and, riding him on the camel, set off towards Damascus.

In this way the patriarch was brought before Mu'awiya. The caliph called a large meeting, to which the captive was also summoned. The Qurayshi who had been smitten by the Byzantine courtier was astonished to see his antagonist appear from behind a curtain. "Cousin," Mu'awiya said to his fellow Qurayshi. "Now is the time for you to be thankful to this Syrian. He has done exactly as I told him to, without the slightest omission. His efforts have enabled you to extract your right from the patriarch, without wronging him."

"If I had not sworn an oath," said the Qurayshi, "I would have forgiven him." Raising his hand, he struck the patriarch once. "That suffices," he said. "I am pardoning him what remains."

"You are our guest for three days," Mu'awiya told the patriarch. When the three days were completed he was allowed to return to Constantinople, along with the Syrian and the presents he had been promised. Afterwards, all the Roman patriarchs gathered before the Caesar. They advised him not to mistreat Muslim prisoners from now on. "I have not seen any people as respectful, generous and good-natured as they are," said the patriarch who had been their guest. "If Mu'awiya had wanted to imprison me, he could have done so; but that was not his wish."

*(Al-Dawah, Mecca, 14 Jamad al-Ula, 1405 AH)*

## There is Always a Way

You have probably seen manufacturers of glass frames scoring the surfaces of sheets of glass with a pen-like instrument, then neatly snapping them into two. The cutting edge of this tool is made up of small razor-edged diamonds. Even the huge drills used for boring through hundreds of feet of rock strata in the search for oil are fitted with diamond cutting edges. It is the extreme hardness of the diamond which makes these tools so effective. The diamond is, in fact, the hardest known naturally-occurring substance. It cannot even be scratched. Put it in acid, and there will be no effect. But there is another aspect to this wonderful stone. If it is heated to a very high temperature it will disappear – it will simply sublimate into carbon dioxide, and if struck a sharp blow at exactly the right point, it will break as under. You have only to look at diamond gemstones to see what exquisite, multi-faceted forms they can be given by jewellers, because, by studying the inner structure of the diamond, they know exactly where and how to break them.

Similarly, when we find ourselves in difficult situations, we should study them carefully, in the way that the jeweller studies his diamond. We should not approach them, carelessly, from the strongest point, but with circumspection, from the weakest. We should not adopt methods which are likely to gain poor results like aggressiveness or violence, for these only engender bitterness and obstinacy in others. We should resort to politeness and diplomacy – eschew harsh language in favour of gentleness and tact.

We should consider also that there are certain human beings who are known as “rough diamonds.” That is, on the outside they appear to be unattractive and without merit, whereas on the inside they are of great worth. To bring out their worth, so that their true value is apparent to society, it is pointless scratching at the surface or using acid. If the upright human soul is to be revealed in all its beauty it must be given the same delicate handling and treated with the same expertise as the master craftsman lavishes on a superb but fragile piece of jewelry.

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